

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

Thursday, February 23rd, 2017

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dr. Tom Galvin, and I am a retired dentist from Glastonbury who has worked with children who are either uninsured or underinsured in East Hartford and Hartford, and throughout the state. I have also worked in many School Based Health Centers over the years. This is why I am submitting testimony today to comment on:

H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Every year, more than half a million individuals depend on life-sustaining services provided by Connecticut's community nonprofits. As we face a \$1.7 billion shortfall in the FY18 budget, the governor and legislature have two choices to balance the budget: shift services into the community to save services and move thousands of individuals off of waiting lists, or continue with business as usual and cut vital services to thousands of the state's most vulnerable individuals and their families.

As was reported in The Courant on February 22, 2017, Emergency Departments are overwhelmed with children in need of accessible and cost-effective, high quality behavioral health services. As such, it is incomprehensible that SBHCs who employ licensed social workers (LCSW) specifically trained for child therapy, would be cut at a time when their services are most needed. The cost-effectiveness of having a full time SBHC LCSW to work with kids who would otherwise be sitting for days in an Emergency Room is a fraction of the cost. These services should be provided in the community through the SBHCs, and can be part of the solution to the state's budgeting problems. .

Department of Public Health

- The Governor has proposed a 10% reduction to School Based Health Centers, a cut of \$921,000 in each fiscal year. Despite the rise in health care over the past 10 years, SBHCs funding have received no COLA in over 10 years. Instead of increasing our funding to meet rising health care costs, our funding has been systematically reduced. This proposed cut will close many SBHCs at a time when families and children need these cost effective services most.
- As Medicaid services are reduced, the need for families to remain at work while their children have access to health care is more imperative now more than ever before. With minimal administrative overhead, as the SBHCs are located in schools,
- School Based Health Centers are part of the essential system of care for children and adolescents, providing physical, mental health, and oral health services to over 44,000 students in CT. Proposed cuts to School Based Health Centers would mean thousands of children will receive fewer direct medical and mental health services provided to them in an accessible way – within their schools. Some of these lost visits will mean that:
- Students who need state-mandated school entry physicals will have access issues, rather than being seen immediately so they can attend school.
- Students with asthma or other treatable conditions that could have been addressed during the school day may now go into an acute medical crisis and need to be seen in the Emergency Department, costly in terms of missed class time and medical expenses.
- Students who are in need of mental health supports may now sit on a waiting list rather than being seen before their problems worsen.

Recommendation

- Currently the Commissioner has proposed over \$9 million to provide the HPV vaccine to privately insured children. I would propose that the burden of cost for the vaccine is shifted back to the private insurers, a through a recommendation from the Insurance Committee. State funds should be used for those services where there exists no other funding, like SBHCs, rather than to the profits of Insurance Companies.